

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 5 at line 10 with the following rewritten paragraph:

--FIGs. 1-6 illustrate a first preferred embodiment of the present invention, a boat boarding device 10 for facilitating the boarding of a boat by ambulatory animals, such as dogs or cats, from the water into a boat. The device 10 includes an elongated ramp or ladder member 12 connectable to a boat ladder 13 via a support assembly 14 connected to the ramp member 12 near one end (for convenience, designated the proximal end of the ramp member 12.) Specifically, the support assembly 14 includes a connection assembly 16 for engaging the device 10 to the boat ladder 13. For convenience, the device further includes a positioning or strut assembly 18 extendable from the ramp member 12 to engage the boat ladder 13 or other fixture of a boat to determine the angle between the boat ladder 13 and the ramp member 12. The ramp member 12 preferably includes a plurality of stair-steps 15 formed therein, and the stair steps 15 more preferably have slightly concave surfaces, such that even when the ramp member 12 is deployed at a relatively steep angle, an animal traversing the ramp member 12 will enjoy maximized stability of footing.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 5 at line 22 with the following rewritten paragraph:

--FIG. 3 and 4 illustrate the support assembly 14 in greater detail. The support assembly 14 includes a crossbeam 19 from which at least one, and more preferably two, hooked support members 20 depend. The support members 20 are preferably pivotally connected and more preferably slidably connected at one end to the crossbeam 19 and terminate in a (preferably C-shaped) hook member 22 at the other end. The support members 20 may thus pivot relative the

crossbeam 19 as well as slide along the length of the crossbeam 19. By slidably positioning the support members 20, the connection assembly 16 may be adjusted to fit boat ladders 13 of a continuum of widths and sizes. In one contemplated embodiment, the connection assembly 16 further includes sliding position markers or stops (not shown) for indicating a preferred position to which the support members 20 should be moved along the crossbeam 19 for engaging a preferred boat ladder 13. The hook member 22 is preferably sized to engagingly receive a top ladder rung 26, i.e. a cylinder with a diameter ranging from about  $\frac{3}{4}$  to about 3 inches. The support assembly 14 is preferably connected to the ramp member 12 by pivoting connection pin 24 extending through an aperture in the ramp member 12. Alternately, the support assembly 14 may be connected to the ramp via any convenient means, such as through the engagement of the ends of the crossbeam 19 into cavities formed in the ramp 12 member to engagingly receive the crossbeam, or the like.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6 at line 15 with the following rewritten paragraph:

--The support assembly 14 further includes a connection assembly 16 for engaging the device 10 to a boat ladder frame 30. The connection assembly 16 includes at least one, and more preferably two, pivotable gripping members 32 coupled to the respective support members 20. A first biasing member 34 is operationally connected between the support member 20 and the gripping member 32 to urge the gripping member 32 to move or pivot in a first direction (preferably to orient the gripping member substantially perpendicular to the support member 20.) In other words, the first biasing member 34 functions to extend the gripping member 32 outwardly away from the support member 20, such that when the device 10 and connection

assembly 16 is positioned against a ladder frame 30, the respective gripping members 32 extend behind the ladder frame 30 to wedgingly connect the device 10 to the frame 30. Pivoting a respective gripping members 32 in the first direction thus position the ladder frame 30 generally between the respective gripping member 32 and the support member 20 to wedge or affix the device 10 to the boat ladder 13.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 7 at line 4 with the following rewritten paragraph:

--The connection assembly 16 further includes a second biasing member 36 connected to each respective gripping member 32, such that actuation of the second biasing member 36 urges the respective gripping member 32 to move or pivot in a second direction opposite the first direction. Thus, actuation of the second biasing member 36 urges the gripping member 32 to release an engaged ladder 13 portion and actuates removal of the device 10 from the ladder 13. Preferably, the second gripping member 32 is a flexible connector, such as a lanyard member, connected to each respective second biasing member 36 and extending away therefrom. Movement of the lanyard member 36 away from the gripping member(s) 32 thus actuates their movement in the second direction.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 7 at line 13 with the following rewritten paragraph:

--As illustrated in greater detail in FIG. 1, 2 and 5, the device 10 also includes a positioning or strut assembly 18 for defining the contact angle between the ramp member 12 and the boat (and/or boat ladder 13.) The strut assembly 18 includes a first elongated strut 40 and a second elongated strut 42, each respective strut 40, 42 independently connectable to the ramp

member 12 via a plurality of spaced apertures 44 formed therethrough. The first and second struts 40, 42 each include a respective first and second pivotable connecting pin 46, 48 extending from one end (for convenience, the proximal end), and are preferably joined at their respective other ends (for convenience, the distal ends) by a coupling connector 50. The coupling connector 50 is preferably a pivoting connector, such that the struts 40, 42 may be moved relative each other through a continuum of angles. Engagement of the struts 40, 42 to the ramp member 12 via insertion of the respective pins 46, 48 each into a respective one of the plurality of apertures 44 generally defines a triangle with a respective strut 40, 42 and the ramp member 12 each comprising a side. The selection of the position of the apertures 44 into which the pins 46, 48 are inserted determined the internal angles of the triangle, which in turn determines the angle between the ramp member 12 and the boat ladder 13. One of the struts 40, 42 (preferably the first elongated strut 40) further includes an elongated boat ladder-engaging member 54 connected to its distal end and oriented perpendicular thereto to abuttingly engage the boat ladder from when the connecting assembly 16 is engaged thereto and the struts 40, 42 are engaged to the ramp member 12.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 8 at line 12 with the following rewritten paragraph:

--In operation, the device 10 is connected to a boat (preferably to a boat ladder 13) by pivoting the gripping members 32 in the second direction, positioning the connection assembly 16 adjacent the boat ladder 13 such that the hooked member 22 abuttingly receives the top rung 26 of the boat ladder 13 and the ladder frame 30 is adjacent the support member 20. The

gripping member 32 is then pivoted in the first direction such that the ladder frame 30 is snugly engaged between the gripping member 32 and the support member 20.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 8 at line 18 with the following rewritten paragraph:

--The angle defined between the ramp member 12 and the boat ladder 13 (and, more generally, the boat) is determined by the selection of apertures 44 into which pins 46, 48 are inserted. If pins 46, 48 are inserted into apertures 44 spaced relatively close together, the angle between the ramp member 12 and the boat ladder 13 will be relatively great (and, conversely, the ramp member 12 will extend below the horizontal waterline at a relatively shallow angle;) if pins 46, 48 are inserted into apertures spaced relatively far apart, the angle between the ramp member 12 and the boat ladder 13 will be relatively small (and, conversely, the ramp member 12 will extend below the horizontal waterline at a relatively steep angle.) Likewise, if the positions of the apertures 44 into which pins 46, 48 are inserted are relatively close to the proximal end of the ramp member 12, the angle between the ramp member 12 and the boat ladder 13 will be relatively great (and, conversely, the ramp member will extend below the horizontal waterline at a relatively shallow angle;) if pins 46, 48 are inserted into apertures spaced relatively far from the proximal end of the ramp member 12, the angle between the ramp member 12 and the boat ladder 13 will be relatively small (and, conversely, the ramp member 12 will extend below the horizontal waterline at a relatively steep angle.) The support member 20 typically engages a portion of the boat ladder 13 (and, more generally, the boat) that is above the waterline and holds a portion of the ramp member 12 likewise above the waterline, while the rest of the ramp